



Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



January 25, 2017

School-Based Sealant program provides cost-effective preventative dental care

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

Sarasota, FL—Thanks to overwhelming support from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, The Patterson Foundation, the Rotary Club of Sarasota Foundation, Florida Department of Health and Sarasota County Schools, the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) recently launched a school-based dental sealant program designed to stop tooth decay (cavities) and the associated dental and health problems.

More than 1,600 second grade students in 17 elementary schools across the county are eligible for the free program. DOH-Sarasota has committed a full-time licensed dental hygienist to the program which began in early January and will conclude by the end of the semester.

Students with written parental consent are taught how to properly clean their teeth. They also receive a fluoride treatment, and protective dental sealants are applied to the grooves of the chewing surfaces of back teeth, if needed. There is no cost for the service. The program will be subsidized by Medicaid so it is sustainable for many years to come.

Health officials say this program is not a substitute for a complete dental check-up by a licensed dentist. If tooth decay is suspected, the dental hygienist's role includes linking families to a dental and medical home for ongoing care. School nurses are helping to ensure second grade students who have visited the school health room for toothache and related dental complaints can access the program.

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MEDIA NOTES:

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Website: www.sarasotahealth.org



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The local foundations provided \$23,518 in one-time funding for portable dental equipment for the traveling program. "We are grateful the sealant program could now be done in school, providing a valuable preventative service while minimizing missed time in the classroom," says Sarasota County Schools Health Services Supervisor Suzie Dubose.

Tooth decay is the single most common chronic condition affecting children in the United States and in Florida. Left untreated, dental decay can result in:

- Infection, pain, inadequate tooth function and tooth loss;
- Impaired nutrition and inadequate speech development;
- Costly emergency department visits; or
- Poor school performance.

"Dental sealants are approved by the American Dental Association as a safe and painless way to help prevent cavities. Second-graders are developing their first set of permanent molars so it is important to protect those teeth from sources of tooth decay," says DOH-Sarasota Dental Director Dr. Paul Stein.

According to the Florida Department of Health, which provided funding for the dental hygienist, every dollar Florida invests on dental sealants saves \$1.88 in fillings. Sealants have been shown to be 86 percent effective in preventing cavities.

For more information, visit www.sarasotahealth.org and click on Dental Care under Popular Programs and Services or call 941-861-2900.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health, please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.

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